

Storytelling techniques

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Fiction techniques that make elearning more engaging:

- A character faces a challenge (better: multiple challenges)
- Show, don't tell. Examples:
 - In a multiple-choice activity, show the effect of the learner's choice instead of providing feedback like "correct" or "incorrect"
 - Instead of giving lots of background through text, have characters reveal the most important info through dialog
- Make it a conversation
 - Make learners justify their choices
 - Have characters occasionally ignore learners' suggestions (good way to show common errors)
- Lead with the activity, not the information
 - Plunge learners into an activity right at the beginning
 - Design the course so it's a series of activities that contain the necessary information
- Give them a reason to care
 - Give a character a real-world goal the learner will care about
 - Use a story to show the learner how the course will help them meet a goal

Classic story ideas:

Classic story idea	Description	Example
Fatal flaw	A character has a weakness or blind spot that causes trouble.	An employee wants everyone to like her, so she doesn't report a coworker's serious misbehavior.
An ignored person triumphs	A character who is belittled or ignored wins a great victory, usually by using the traits that were belittled.	Other salespeople joke about a shy, quiet salesman, but because he listens well to his prospects, he outsells them all.
A bad decision	A character makes a bad decision under pressure and regrets it.	At a conference, a competitor suggests that a manufacturing firm isn't innovative. The CEO of the firm responds by announcing a new product that he should have kept secret.
A quest	The protagonist learns of a valuable object or goal and struggles to reach it.	The sales team at Acme learns that MegaCo is unhappy with their current vendor. It's Acme's chance to win MegaCo as a client. Can they do it?
Impending disaster	Something awful is going to happen unless your characters act in time.	A horribly overpriced invoice has been entered accidentally in the system. A character has to find and cancel it before it reaches the client.
Boy gets girl, boy loses girl...	Two characters or parties unite, a disagreement or misunderstanding parts them, and they try to get back together again.	MegaCo and GiantPlc decide to merge but are prevented when they ignore an important EU regulation. They must change their approach to satisfy the regulation.
A mystery	A strange event has occurred and your characters must solve it by a deadline.	Sales in Region IV suddenly increased when a new regional manager was hired. What is she doing differently, and can the same changes be made in Region II before a strong new competitor dominates that market?